

Message Text

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70

ACTION ARA-10

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R 201922Z AUG 75

FM AMEMBASSY PANAMA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4881

INFO PAN CANAL

USCINCSO

AMEMBASSY BOGOTA

AMEMBASSY CARACAS

AMEMBASSY LIMA

AMEMBASSY QUITO

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR, PN, XM

SUBJECT: HEMISPHERE'S HEADS-OF-STATE CONFERENCE IN PANAMA 1976:

U.S. PROBLEM OR OPPORTUNITY

SUMMARY: PRESS REPORTING FROM BOGOTA AUGUST 14 REVEALED THAT PANAMANIAN MINISTER-NEGOTIATOR TACK HELD SECRET MEETINGS WITH COLOMBIAN FOREIGN MINISTER LIEVANO LAST WEEK TO COORDINATE EFFORTS FOR MEETING OF LA HEADS OF STATE NEXT JUNE IN PANAMA. MEETING TO COMMEMORATE 150TH ANNIVERSARY OF BOLIVAR'S PANAMA CONGRESS, PLUMP FOR LATIN UNITY, AND TO RESTATE LATIN SOLIDARITY WITH PANAMA RE CANAL NEGOTIATIONS WITH U.S. WHILE ABOVE REPORT MENTIONED ONLY LA HEADS OF STATE, EMBASSY ASSUMES ALL HEMISPHERIC HEADS OF STATE WOULD BE INVITED. MEETING WOULD HENCE, ACCORDING TO "LA ESTRELLA" EDITORIAL, BE EITHER PROBLEM OR OPPORTUNITY FOR PRESIDENT FORD--PROBLEM IF TREATY NEGOTIATIONS HAVE NOT BEEN CONCLUDED, OPPORTUNITY TO CONFER WITH HIS HEMISPHERIC PEERS IF THEY HAVE. END SUMMARY.

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1. AUGUST 14 PRESS REPORTS FROM BOGOTA, TRANSMITTED HERE VIA

FBIS (FBIS PANAMA 150405Z AUG 75) DISCLOSE THAT PANAMANIAN FOREIGN MINISTER (AS REPORTED) JUAN ANTONIO TACK IN SECRET MEETINGS WITH COLOMBIAN FOREIGN MINISTER LIEVANO PRESSED FOR THE CONVOCAION OF A MEETING OF ALL LATIN AMERICAN HEADS OF STATE NEXT JUNE 22 IN PANAMA. MEETING WOULD COMEMORATE ANNIVERSARY OF THE "CONGRESO ANFICTIONICO" CALLED BY SIMON BOLIVAR WHICH MET HERE IN 1826. WHILE HEMISPHERIC SOLIDARITY IN GENERAL WILL UNDOUBTEDLY BE INVOKED IN CLOUDS OF FUSTIAN, POINT OF PROPOSED CONFERENCE CLEARLY IS TO REITERATE LA UNITED STAND WITH PANAMA OVER CANAL ISSUE AND PRESSURE U.S. TO ACCEDE TO PANAMA'S DEMANDS REGARDING IT.

2. PLANS FOR CONVOKING HIGH-LEVEL CONFERENCE IN PANAMA ANNOUNCED AT DECEMBER 1974 AYACUCHO MEETING OF AMERICAN LEADERS WERE RESTATED BY PRESIDENTS LOPEZ AND PEREZ OF COLOMBIA AND VENEZUELA, AND PANAMA'S GENERAL TORRIJOS IN THEIR SANTA MARTA MINI-SUMMIT OF JULY 28-29 LAST MONTH. FBIS ARTICLE ADDS THAT COLOMBIAN PRESIDENT LOPEZ WILL DISCUSS THE CONFERENCE IDEA WITH PRESIDENT LARA DURING HIS FORTHCOMING VISIT TO ECUADOR, AND THAT LOPEZ' VISIT THERE REPRESENTS "A DECISIVE STEP" IN REALIZING THE CONFERENCE.

3. WHILE CITED FBIS ARTICLE MENTIONS ONLY LATIN AMERICAN HEADS OF STATE, EDITORIAL IN "LA ESTRELLA DE PANAMA" ON AUGUST 9 ASSUMED (AS DOES EMBASSY) THAT ALL AMERICAN HEADS OF STATE WOULD BE INVITED. EDITORIAL NOTED, "ONE CAN ANTICIPATE, THEN, THE INTIMATE PROBLEM PRESIDENT FORD AND THOSE WHO ACCOMPANY HIM WILL CONFRONT IF BY THAT TIME THE NEGOTIATIONS DESIGNED TO CLOSE THE 'OPEN WOUND' (I.E., CANAL ZONE) HAVE NOT BEEN CONCLUDED." SHOULD THE U.S. PRESIDENT DECLINE THE INVITATION, EDITORIAL CONTINUED, CITING "SOME SORT" OF EXCUSE, HE WOULD NOT ONLY MISS A SINGULAR OPPORTUNITY TO CONFER WITH HIS HEMISPHERIC COUNTERPARTS, BUT WOULD HOLD THE U.S. UP TO RIDICULE AND SHAME BEFORE PUBLIC OPINION.

4. COMMENT: THERE APPEARS TO BE STILL A NUMBER OF "IFS" SURROUNDING THE PROPOSED HEADS OF STATE CONFERENCE HERE NEXT JUNE 22. PANAMA, AS HOST, AND COLOMBIA AND VENEZUELA CLEARLY FAVOR IT AND SEEM WILLING TO CAJOLE THOSE WHO NEED CAJOLING TO BRING IT OFF. WHETHER OTHER LATIN NATIONS FEEL THEIR HEADS LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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OF STATE WOULD NEED TO ATTEND IN PERSON IS STILL PROBLEMATIC.

5. AS THE "ESTREALLA" EDITORIAL CORRECTLY POINTS OUT, PRESIDENT FORD'S ATTENDANCE OR ABSENCE WILL POSE PROBLEMS AS WELL AS OPPORTUNITIES FOR HIM AND THE U.S. BOTH PROBLEMS AND POSSIBILITY REVOLVE AROUND HOW MUCH PROGRESS THE CANAL TREATY NEGOTIATIONS WILL HAVE ACHIEVED. IF A NEW TREATY IS CONCLUDED, EVEN IF STILL ONLY "IN CONCEPT", PRESIDENT FORD COULD USE THIS

FACT AND THE JUNE 1976 FORUM TO DEMONSTRATE U.S. GOOD FAITH
IN IMPLEMENTING ITS POLICY OF CREATING A MATURE PARTNERSHIP
RELATION WITH LATIN AMERICA. IF TREATY NEGOTIATIONS HAVE NOT
BEEN CONCLUDED, FOR WHATEVER REASON, THE U.S. COULD EXPECT
STRONG PRESSURE FROM LATIN AMERICAN LEADERS TO COMPLETE THEM.
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